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ABSTRACT

The correlates of career choice and the problem areas affecting career decisions are important to counseling psychologists. They are important to understanding the complexities of vocational behavior, facilitating differential treatment in counseling, and developing preventive career programs for men, women, and special groups. The effects of the correlates and problem areas affecting career decision making--and specifically testing of the validity of a model hypothesizing six factors affecting the career decision-making process--were investigated. A cross-sectional sample of high school, undergraduate, and graduate students (N=1436) responded to the Career Factor Checklist (CFC) and reported the degree to which the 6 general factors and 22 sub-factors affected their career decision making. Data analysis indicated that the CFC measured career choice factors identified by the model. A significant grade main effect and significant sex-by-grade interactions were found for four of the six factors assessed. Positive support was found for the model and the hypothesized factors affecting the career decision-making process. Implications are discussed for individual counseling and for preventive programming around career correlated in decision making. (Author/BMW)

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FACTORS, CORRELATES, EMOTIONAL BARRIERS AFFECTING CAREER DECISIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The correlates of career choice and the problem areas affecting career decisions are important to counseling psychologists. They are important to understanding the complexities of vocational behavior, facilitating differential treatment in counseling, and developing preventive career programs for men, women, and special groups. This research examined the self-reported impact of six general factors affecting career decision making and specifically tested the validity of the Career Factor Checklist (CFC) developed from the O'Neil, Meeker, & Borgers' (1978) model. A cross-sectional sample of high school, undergraduate, and graduate students (N=1436) completed the Career Factor Checklist (CFC) and reported the degree that six general factors and 22 sub-factors identified by the O'Neil et al. (1978) model affected their career decision making. Data were analyzed using factor analysis and analysis of variance procedures. Results indicated positive support for the O'Neil et al. (1978) model and the hypothesized factors affecting the career decision-making process. The factor analysis indicated that the CFC measured the six general career factors identified by the O'Neil et al. (1978) model. A significant grade main effect and significant sex by grade interactions were found for four of the six factors assessed. Implications are discussed for individual counseling and for preventive programming around the correlates in career decision making. Future research is recommended for greater understanding of the correlates and problem areas affecting career decisions.

Submitted: January 15, 1980

FACTORS, CORRELATES, PROBLEM AREAS AFFECTING CAREER DECISION MAKING OF A CROSS-SECTIONAL SAMPLE OF STUDENTS

The correlates of the career decision-making process are those factors that affect an individual's selection of a career. Reviewing these factors, Crites (1969) indicates that career development theorists have emphasized different correlates in explicating their theories (Roe, 1957; Bordin, Nachmann, & Segal, 1963; Holland, 1973; Super, 1957). Crites describes the correlates in terms of stimulus, organismic, and response variables. Stimulus variables include culture, social class, race, geographic region, community, family, school and church. Organismic variables include endocrine glands, physique, and heredity. Response variables include general aptitudes, interests, and personality. In Crites' view research on the correlates of career choice is important for three reasons: (a) to understand individual differences in career choice, (b) to better understand the differential patterns in career development, and (c) to develop an empirical basis in career development theory and practice.

There is limited empirical evidence on the correlates of career decision making (Crites, 1969). Career development theorists and researchers have recommended that research be completed on the correlates and factors influencing career decisions (Betz, 1977; Jones & Jung, 1978; Osipow, 1973; Harren, Kass, Tinsley, & Moreland, 1978, 1979). Osipow (1973) recommends research on the influence of familial, social, situational, and age variables on career decisions. In an annual review of vocational behavior and career development Betz (1977) recommends that research be completed on the variables that

restrict individual alternatives in career planning. It has also been recommended that research be completed on career factors that influence decisional status and predict gender-dominant career choices (Harren et al., 1978, 1979). Additionally, social learning theory of careers (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1978) emphasizes multiple factors affecting career decision making and Jones & Jung (1978) recommend four research priorities related to these factors.

Research is needed to identify the correlates of career decision making and the specific problem areas that inhibit career choice. The identification, understanding, and empirical validation of the correlates affecting career decision making can facilitate the diagnosis of clients' problems in career counseling and the implementation of effective counseling interventions. Additionally, if the correlates can be understood in terms of their sex and grade level differences, counseling treatments and preventive programs can be developed for men and women at different educational levels.

A recent career decision-making model depicts six general factors and 22 sub-factors affecting both sex role socialization and career decision making (O'Neil, Meeker, Borgers, 1978; Note 2; O'Neil & Bush, 1978; O'Neil, Ohlde, Barké, Prosser Gelwick, & Garfield, in press). The O'Neil, Meeker, Borgers' (1978) model (see Figure 1) is based on previous theories of career

Insert Figure 1 About Here

development (Bordin, Nachmann, & Segal, 1963; Holland, 1973; Roe, 1957; Super, 1957; Super & Bachrach, 1957), correlates of career choice (Blau, Parnes, Gustad, & Jessor, 1968; Crites, 1969), social systems approach to career development (Osipow, 1973), a social learning theory of career selection

(Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1978), general theory about sex difference in career development (Crites, 1969; Mishler, 1975; Osipow, 1975; Psathas, 1968; Senesh & Osipow, 1973; Zytowski, 1969), and theories about sex role development (Kagan, 1964; Kohlberg, 1966; Mischel, 1970; Mussen, 1969).

This career decision-making model hypothesizes that the individual, societal, familial, socioeconomic, situational, and psychosocial-emotional factors affect both the sex role socialization and the career decision-making processes. The individual factor includes self-expectancies, abilities, interests, attitudes, and achievement needs. The societal factor includes educational experiences, peer group influences, and mass media. Childhood experiences, mother's role model, and father's role model comprise the familial factor. The socioeconomic factor includes social class, race, sex discrimination, and the supply and demand of jobs. The situational factor includes chance and the course of least resistance. The psychosocial-emotional factors (fear of failure, fear of success, lack of confidence, lack of assertiveness, and role conflict) are defined as problem areas that can potentially influence, restrict, or limit personal and career development (O'Neil & Bush, 1978). These psychosocial-emotional factors have been identified in the literature as affecting career decisions (Birney, Burdick, & Teevan, 1969; Farmer, 1978; Horner, 1972; Jakubowski-Spector, 1973; Mishler, 1975; Osipow, 1973, 1975; Tresemer, 1977). Additionally, they parallel previously defined vocational problem areas such as interpersonal conflicts, intrapersonal conflicts, and environmental-cultural conflicts (Berezin, 1957; Bordin, 1946; Byrne, 1958; Pepinsky, 1948).

The purpose of this research was two fold. First, to validate the six general factors and 22 subfactors of the O'Neil et al. model (See

Figure 1), using the Career Factor Checklist, a 27 item instrument derived from the model. Secondly, the study examined the self-reported impact of these 27 factors on the career decision making of a cross-sectional sample of high school, undergraduate, and graduate students (N=1436). Two hypotheses were assessed in this study. First, it was hypothesized that the 22 sub-factors of the O'Neil et al. (1978) model would cluster into the six general factors. Second, it was hypothesized that there would be significant sex by grade differences on the six factors of the model.

Method

Subjects

Students (N=1436) from one high school (N=177) and two large midwestern universities (N=580 and 679) were administered the Career Factor Checklist (CFC) (O'Neil & Ohlde, Note 1). University students were administered the CFC in both classroom and residence hall settings. High school students were graduating seniors and were polled in various classrooms (N=177). The final sample of 600 males and 836 females was distributed by sex and grade as follows: high school (67 males, 110 females), college freshmen (197 males, 289 females), sophomores (70 males, 132 females), juniors (83 males, 103 females), and seniors (69 males, 71 females), graduate students (105 males, 110 females) and special students (9 males, 21 females).

Instrumentation

The Career Factor Checklist (CFC) (O'Neil & Ohlde, Note 1) was developed from the O'Neil et al. (1978) model and includes 27 items (corresponding to the factors and subfactors) divided into six scales.[1] The CFC asks

[1]The CFC is available for limited use by permission from James M. O'Neil, Department of Counseling and University Counseling Center, 116 Bailey Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Ks. 66045.

respondents to indicate on a five-point Likert scale ("very much" to "not at all") the degree to which the following factors affect their career decision making: 1) familial factors (4 items) including early childhood experiences, mother's role model, and father's role model, 2) societal factors (4 items) including educational experiences, peer group influences, and mass media, 3) individual factors (6 items) including self-expectancies, abilities, interests, attitudes, and achievement needs, 4) socioeconomic factors (5 items) including social class, race, sex discrimination, and supply and demand of jobs, 5) situational factors (3 items) including chance and the course of least resistance, and 6) psychosocial-emotional factors (5 items) including fear of failure, fear of success, lack of confidence, lack of assertiveness, and role conflict. Hoyt (1941) reliability coefficients for the six factors of the CFC ranged from .65 to .81. The following test-retest reliabilities over a four-week period were established for each of the CFC factors and for the CFC's total score: Familial Factor (r_{tt}=.73); Societal Factor (r_{tt}=.80); Individual factor (r_{tt}=.52); Socioeconomic Factor (r_{tt}=.49); Situational Factor (r_{tt}=.52); Psychosocial-Emotional Factor (r_{tt}=.83); total score of CFC (r_{tt}=.83).

Analysis

The CFC item responses for the total samples of males and females were factor analyzed using the BMDP/P4M principal components factor analysis program. Each of the six general factors (except the psychosocial-emotional) and 22 subfactors is represented by one item on the CFC. Items with factor loadings of at least .30 were used to define the factors. Six separate two-factor analyses of variance (BMDP/P2V) were used to test for differences in the effects of each of the six factors for sex and grade level.

Results

Table 1 gives the factorial structure of the CFC. Data in Table 1 show unique factor loadings for all of the CFC items. For males, all items had unique factor loadings greater than .30. For females, three items (6, 19, and 23) cross loaded on more than one factor. However, each of these items had a factor loading greater than .35 on the factor with which it was theoretically associated. The mean factor loadings for males varied between .64 (Societal factor) and .81 (Individual factor). For females, the mean factor loadings varied between .59 (Societal) and .90 (Individual).

Insert Table 1 About Here

The Familial factor explained the largest proportion of the variance for both males and females (20 and 27 percent respectively). The sum of the eigenvalues for all CFC factors was 16.34 for males and 17.86 for females. These account for 60% of the cumulative variance for males and 66% of the cumulative variance for females.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the six factors for males and females at each of the six grade levels. Inspection of the means

Insert Table 2 About Here

indicates that the subjects reported the effects of the six factors on their career decision making in the following order from "most effect" to "least effect": Individual, Familial, Societal, Psychosocial-Emotional, Socioeconomic, and Situational. Subjects reported that the six factors affected them very much or somewhat in the following percentages: Individual (84%); Familial (50%);

Societal (47%); Socioeconomic (35%); Situational (25%); and Psychosocial-Emotional (21%). Subjects reported that the six factors affected them "very little" or "not at all" in the following percentages: Psychosocial-Emotional (67%); Socioeconomic (53%); Societal (53%); Situational (48%); Familial (37%); Individual (12%). Subjects reported that the Psychosocial-Emotional Factors affected them very much or somewhat in the following percentages: Role Conflict (27%); Fear of Failure (26%); Lack of Confidence (20%); Lack of Assertiveness (17%); and Fear of Success (14%).

Univariate analysis of variance (sex by grade level) were calculated for the six factors of the CFC. Analyses of the scores for Factor I (Familial) and Factor II (Societal) indicated no significant main or interaction effects. Significant sex by grade level interactions were found for Factor III (Individual) $F(6,1422)=8.35$, $p < .01$; Factor IV (Socio-economic) $F(6,1422)=2.57$, $p < .01$; Factor VI (Psychosocial-Emotional) $F(6,1422)=2.44$, $p < .01$. Figures 2, 3, and 4 depicts these interactions graphically.

Insert Figures 2, 3, and 4 About Here

The interaction patterns for the Individual and Socioeconomic Factors were similar. Freshmen, sophomore, and special student females reported that the Individual and Socioeconomic Factors have had a lesser effect on their career decision making than males at these grade levels ($p < .05$). High school seniors and junior and senior college females indicated that they were more influenced than males by the Individual and Socioeconomic Factors ($p < .05$). Additionally, freshmen, sophomore, and senior women reported that Psychosocial-Emotional Factors affected their career decision

making to a greater degree than did men at these grade levels ($p < .05$). Less affected by these Psychosocial-Emotional factors were junior and special student females.

Analysis of the data for Factor V (Situational) showed a significant main effect for grade level, $F(6,1422)=7.45$, $p < .01$. Newman-Keuls post hoc analyses indicated that the student groups differed significantly on the degree of effect of the situational factor in the following ways: sophomore, freshmen, and high school students reported the situational factor to affect them significantly more than junior, special, and graduate students; seniors reported that the situational factor affected them more than graduate students; freshmen, sophomore, and high school students reported that the situational factor affected them significantly more than junior and special students; high school, freshmen, sophomore, and senior students reported that the situational factor affected them significantly more than graduate students ($p < .05$). All other post hoc comparisons were non-significant.

Discussion

The results of this study provide evidence of the factorial validity of the Career Factor Checklist. As hypothesized, the factor analysis identified six factors from the 22 sub-factors which corresponded to the factors hypothesized in the O'Neil et al. model as major determinants in the career decision-making process. Factors corresponding to the Individual, Societal, Familial, Socioeconomic, Situational, and Psychosocial-Emotional factors were identified for the samples of both male and female students. These six factors explained approximately 60% of the cumulative variance. The findings of this study are consistent with career development

theorists' hypotheses that multiple factors affect career decisions (Crites, 1969; Osipow, 1973).

The percentage of variance unaccounted for in this study may be explained in several ways. The sample's responses may be affected by their lack of knowledge of how the factors measured by the CFC affect career decision making. Since most students lack life experience and are rarely exposed to information about the multiple factors affecting career decision making, they may be unable to assess the effect of the factors. Exposing students to media presentations that more fully describe the career choice factors may permit a more accurrate report of the impact of the correlates of career decision making. Finally, there may be other variables which affect career decision making that are not identified in the O'Neil et al. model (1978). These variables may correspond to the organismic variables specified by Crites (1969) or the geographic, technological, social, political, and economic policy variables outlined by Krumboltz et al. (1978).

Eighty-four percent of the sample reported that the Individual Factor (self-expectancies, abilities, interests, attitudes, and achievement needs) affected them "very much" or "somewhat." More than half the sample indicated that the Familial, Societal, Socioeconomic, Situational, and Psychosocial-Emotional Factors affected them "very little" or "not at all." Thus, only the Individual Factor which emphasizes internal correlates received high endorsement by the total sample. It appears that 50% of the subjects perceived that external factors (Familial, Societal, Socioeconomic, and Situational) have little or no effect on their career decision making. These high percentages may indicate that the contemporary student is sheltered from the hard realities of how these external factors operate and affect career

decision making. Counselors may need to help clients better understand and clarify the effects of external factors (family, society, socioeconomic status, and chance) on their career decisions.

Subjects reporting that a Psychosocial-Emotional factor affected them "very much" or "somewhat" varied between 14-27% for the 5 subfactors. Role Conflict, Fear of Failure and Lack of Confidence were expressed by more than one-fifth of the sample. These percentages of students who self-reported psychosocial-emotional problems suggest that counselors may need to assess these factors during career counseling.

Significant sex by grade interactions on the Individual, Socioeconomic, Situational, and Psychosocial-Emotional Factors indicate that the perceived effect of these factors varies with sex and year in school. Thus, the hypothesis that significant sex by grade differences would be found for the factors was confirmed. Males reported that the Individual and Socioeconomic Factors affect them early in college (freshmen and sophomore years) whereas females report that these factors affect them later (junior and senior years). Compared to males, freshmen, sophomore, and senior female students indicated that the Psychosocial-Emotional factors affect them earlier in college (freshmen and sophomore years) and in their senior year of college. However, since the study was cross-sectional, no developmental inferences should be drawn from these data.

These results indicate that the correlates and problem areas in career decision making may affect students in significantly different ways. Students need to consider multiple factors in career decision making but may not be able to systematically interrelate them (Hewer, 1963). Thus, counseling practitioners could expose students to these factors and discuss their impli-

cations for the present and future. Since career development theorists have indicated that career decisions are an interaction of internal personality characteristics and the effects of external environment (Bordin et al., 1963; Holland, 1973; Krumboltz et al., 1978; Osipow, 1973; Roe, 1957; Super, 1957), counseling psychologists are encouraged to emphasize both personality and environmental factors during career counseling and with other preventive interventions.

Outreach programs could expose students to information about how the factors may affect them during their college years. The CFC could be administered to students to help them understand how the six factors affect their career decision making. Undecided students needing help in understanding how these factors affect them could be identified and given special assistance. Preventive programs could be developed to facilitate students' integration of their individual career situations with the internal/external forces and realities affecting their career decision making.

Future research needs to document the effects of the individual, societal, familial, socioeconomic, situational, and psychosocial-emotional factors on career decision making. Additionally, the effect of these factors on the sex role socialization process and consequently the choice of gender-dominant careers needs to be assessed (Harren et al., 1978; 1979). Additionally, more research is needed to understand how these factors affect students differently by sex and grade level. Longitudinal studies across the high school, college, and adult working years would help explain the developmental aspects of the factors affecting career decision making. Program models, interventions, and special information on the multiple factors affecting

career decision making are begining to emerge (Elkins, 1975; Harren, 1979; O'Neil, Meeker, & Borgers, 1978; Note 2; O'Neil, Ohlde, Barké, Prosser Gelwick & Garfield, in press). Through these programs and research on the correlates of career choice, counseling psychologists can help individuals understand the increasing complexities of career decision making in an increasingly complex and changing society.

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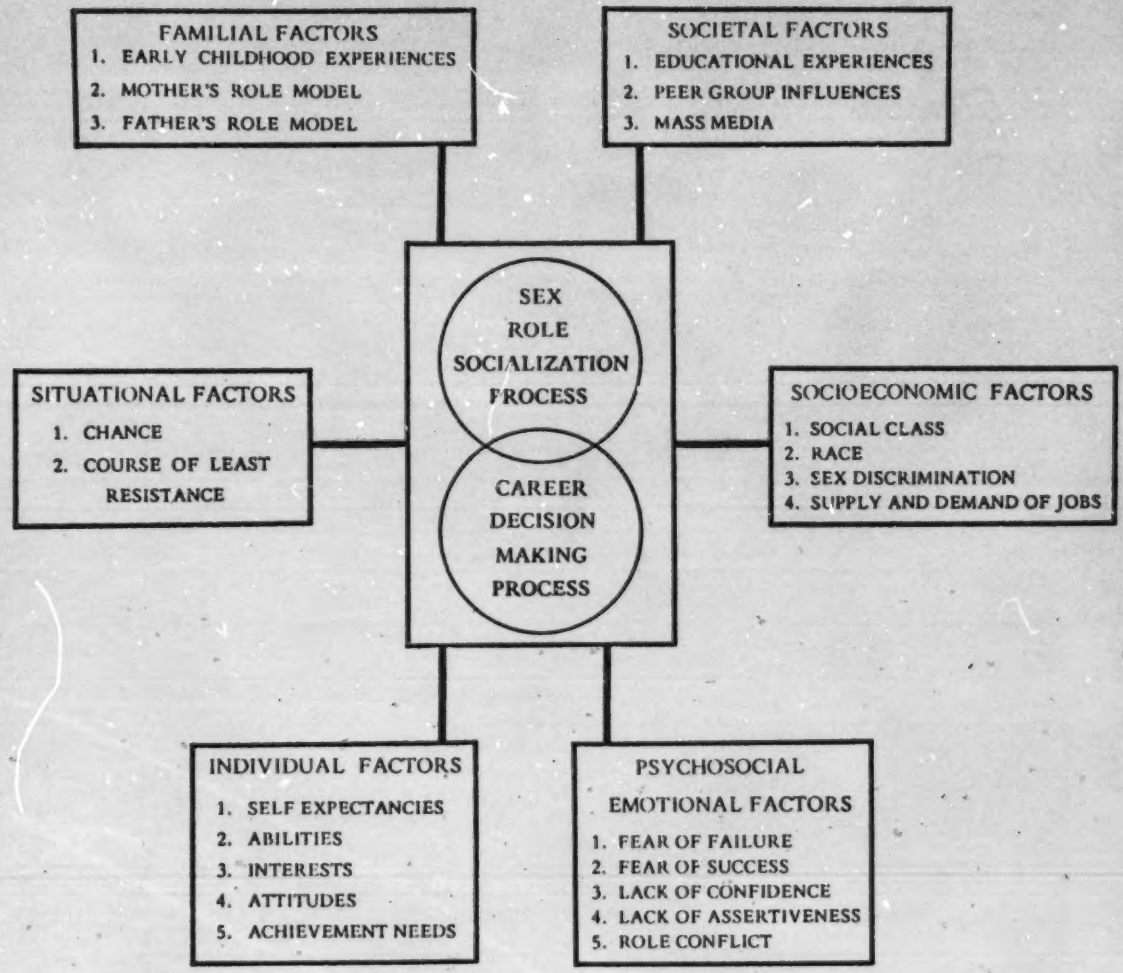

Figure 1: Factors Affecting the Sex Role Socialization and Career Decision Making Process

(O'Neil, Meeker, Borgers, 1978, Note 2; O'Neil & Bush, 1978; O'Neil, Ohlde, Barké, Prosser Gelwick, Garfield, in press)

Table 1

Factorial Structure of the Career Factor Checklist

Factors and Individual Items of The Career Factor Checklist (CFC)	Factor Loadings	
	Male	Female
1. Familial Factors - Factor I Your family's values, attitudes, and behaviors regarding appropriate career choices.	.75	.68
2. Childhood Experiences Your early childhood experiences regarding appropriate career choices.	.71	.62
3. Mother's Role Model Your mother's roles and attitudes related to family, career, and work.	.59	.78
4. Father's Role Model Your father's roles and attitudes related to family, career, and work.	.83	.80
Mean Factor Loadings =	.74	.72
5. Societal Factors - Factor II Society's values, attitudes, and practices related to appropriate career choices.	.62	.55
6. Educational Experiences Educational institutions; values, attitudes, and practices related to appropriate career choices.	.52	.37
7. Peer Group Influences Values, attitudes, and behaviors, of your peers regarding appropriate career choices.	.72	.69
8. Mass Media Values, attitudes, and behaviors depicted on radio and TV and in movies, books, and magazines regarding appropriate career choices.	.70	.74
Mean Factor Loadings =	.64	.59
9. Individual Factors - Factor III Your abilities, interests, self expectancies, attitudes, and need to achieve.	.83	.93
10. Self Expectancies What you expect of yourself related to possible careers now and in the future.	.86	.93

Factors and Individual Items of The Career Factor Checklist (CFC)	Factor Loadings Male	Female
11. **Abilities** All skills you have or can develop.	.83	.92
12. **Interests** Specific activities and areas that arouse your curiosity or attention.	.84	.93
13. **Need to Achieve** Your desire to accomplish certain goals in life.	.79	.90
14. **Attitudes** Your perceptions of yourself and a women's role related to careers.	.72	.83
Mean Factor Loadings =	.81	.90
15. **Socioeconomic Factors - Factor IV** Your social, racial, and ethnic group, and society's economic condition.	.76	.78
16. **Social Class** The social and economic level of you and your family.	.71	.76
17. **Race** Your race.	.69	.42
18. **Sex Discrimination** Your experience of personal and societal discrimination on the basis of sex.	.58	.41
19. **Supply and Demand of Jobs** Availability of jobs.	.30	.37
Mean Factor Loadings =	.68	.59
20. **Situational Factor - Factor V** Unforeseen circumstances and events.	.85	.86
21. **Chance** Unplanned or unpredictable events	.81	.85
22. **Course of Least Resistance** Available options offering the least resistance, hard work, or difficulty.	.34	.43
Mean Factor Loadings =	.67	.71

Factors and Individual Items of The Career Factor Checklist (CFC)	Factor Loadings Male	Female
Psychosocial-Emotional Factors - Factor VI		
23. Fear of Failure Fear of being seen or judged as inadequate and unsuccessful.	.68	.76
24. Fear of Success Avoiding success because of possible negative consequences.	.62	.51
25. Lack of Assertiveness Lack of initiative to express yourself and to act in your best interest.	.81	.79
26. Lack of Confidence Lack of trust in your abilities and potential to be a success.	.83	.88
27. Role Conflict Feelings of frustration over being pulled in opposite directions by your roles (such as career vs family, career vs wife, career vs husband, career vs son/daughter, career vs parent's approval-disapproval).	.65	.64
Mean Factor Loadings =	.72	.72

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of the Six Factors of the Career Factor Checklist (CFC) for Men and Women (N=1436)

	FACTORS FROM THE CAREER FACTOR CHECKLIST[1]											
	Familial(I)		Societal(II)		Individual(III)		Socioeconomic(IV)		Situational(V)		Psychosocial-Emotional(VI)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL												
High School												
M	13.04	12.56	12.67	12.40	25.79	27.00	10.33	9.40	8.76	7.75	11.37	10.85
SD	3.62	3.80	3.38	2.96	3.44	3.39	2.78	4.09	2.75	3.16	5.09	4.89
Freshmen												
M	12.35	12.57	12.41	12.56	26.30	22.57	9.85	11.01	8.05	8.13	11.16	11.88
SD	3.64	3.99	3.31	3.22	5.89	9.39	3.86	3.88	2.65	2.61	4.68	5.09
Sophomore												
M	12.96	12.50	12.24	12.67	27.11	23.12	10.14	10.49	8.11	8.44	10.64	12.40
SD	3.72	4.12	3.32	3.33	3.93	8.80	3.66	3.85	2.65	2.61	4.14	5.30
Junior												
M	12.49	12.95	12.46	11.58	26.96	27.21	9.17	8.76	7.31	7.22	10.09	9.03
SD	3.88	3.86	3.66	3.22	3.37	4.50	3.71	3.67	3.04	2.30	4.51	4.08
Senior												
M	12.97	12.80	11.88	12.45	26.46	26.93	9.59	8.92	7.24	8.21	9.41	10.90
SD	3.95	4.06	3.18	3.27	5.82	4.53	3.63	3.47	2.19	2.92	4.01	4.47
Graduate												
M	13.17	12.65	12.89	12.79	27.61	27.14	9.57	9.76	6.85	6.97	9.57	10.41
SD	3.66	3.71	2.98	3.11	2.67	3.75	3.49	3.88	3.03	2.91	4.18	4.29
Special												
M	13.78	11.95	11.56	11.24	28.20	17.57	11.56	10.19	8.22	6.85	11.33	9.05
SD	3.30	4.72	3.35	3.65	1.56	10.10	2.78	4.09	2.72	3.83	5.33	5.31
Grand Mean	12.68		12.43		25.52		9.96		7.80		10.86	

[1] Item means will vary according to the number of questions in each factor of the Career Factor Checklist. The number of items in each factor of the CFC was: Familial (4), Societal (4), Individual (6), Socioeconomic (5), Situational (3), Psychosocial-Emotional (6).

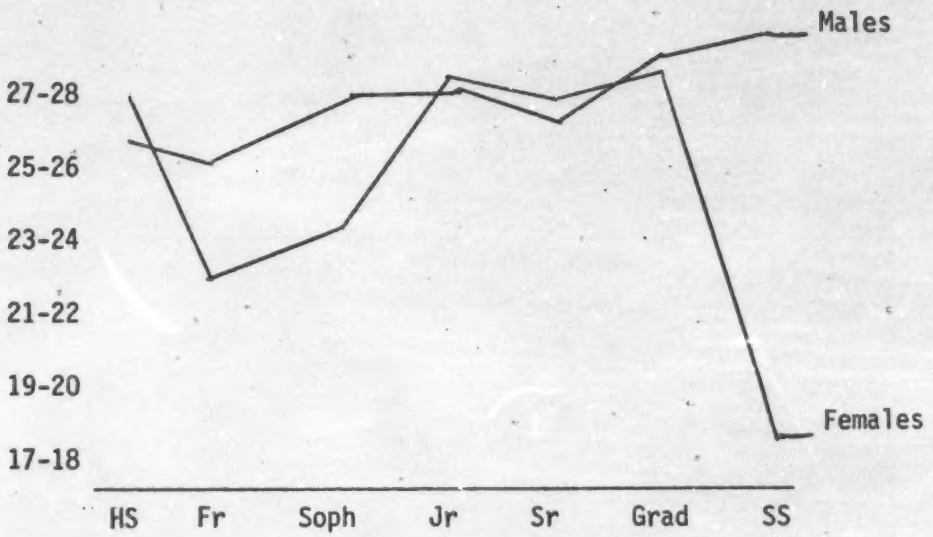

Figure 2: Plotted means for the Individual Factor for males and females at different educational levels.

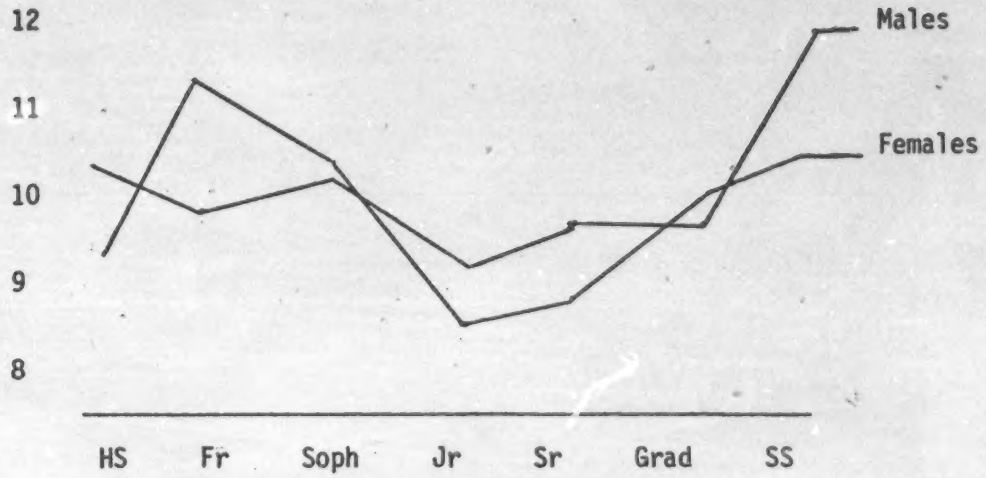

Figure 3: Plotted means for the Socioeconomic Factor for males and females at different educational levels.

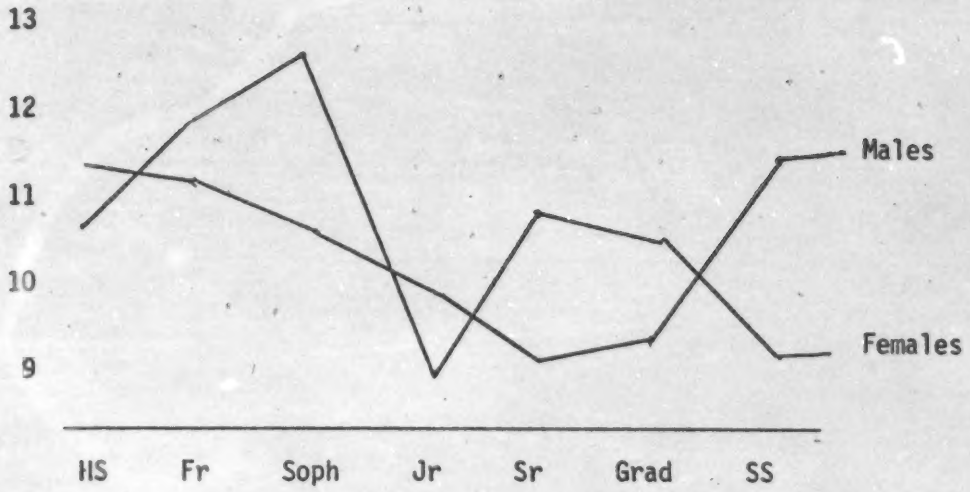

Figure 4: Plotted means for the Emotional Barriers Factor for males and females at different educational levels